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SEMINAR NOTES.

TEACHERS of sociology are frequently asked to tell how students who are confined to the use of English may begin to study sociology.

A previous question, upon which information is seldom furnished, is whether it is desirable that the person concerned should begin to study sociology at all. It is by no means certain that everybody who wishes to be a better citizen, and to help make others better citizens, should try to study sociology. It is possible to learn many things of immediate value about citizenship, not merely about politics in the ordinary sense, but about many ways of coöperation in society outside of politics, without going very deeply into the material or the method of sociology. We shall hereafter illustrate this remark in various ways.

Assuming now that we are advising persons of mature minds who are totally unacquainted with the literature of sociology; we have to say, first, that the things most important to the sociologist are not in books. In order to understand society, the facts of society must be studied face to face, not merely through the medium of print. Second, it is worse than useless for persons to study existing sociological literature who are not accustomed to weigh and use conflicting opinions and irreconcilable systems. It is difficult to find sociological writers who agree with each other throughout, and those who are entirely consistent with themselves are rare. There must be extremely cautious discrimination, the discovery of a few pearls in much rubbish, and appreciation of wisdom obscured by glaring faults. Persons who cannot preserve evenness and independence of judgment under such requirements would better leave sociological study to others.

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In order to use such books as we have to the best advantage in preparation for first-hand study either of concrete social problems, or of sociological doctrine, we recommend the following:

1. Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*.

This is not sociology proper but an argument that it is sorely needed, and an account of the mental preparation necessary. As usual

in Mr. Spencer's writings, many of the numerous *obiter dicta* are as inconclusive as they are entertaining. There is a substance of sound wisdom in the book which entitles it to the careful attention of all.

2. Small and Vincent, *Introduction to the Study of Society*. Books II-V inclusive.

This manual also is a preparation for sociology, and distinctly disclaims the intention of offering a system of sociology. It is a laboratory guide to observation of social facts in some of their most obvious—even if not most commonly observed—relations. The habit of observation and explanation of concrete facts which the manual is designed to form, must be the constant means of getting the material of sociology, unless one is to be contented with book science rather than objective science. Before there is primary fitness for dealing with sociology proper the practice of observing, analyzing and correlating concrete social facts must have become fixed habit.

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It would be well if students would devote the time assigned to study of society for a year to observation of their own community, and to arrangement of results, after the method illustrated in the parts of the manual indicated, before venturing into the field of systematic sociology. Assuming that students have thus had an adequate introduction to a valid method of studying society—which in our opinion bears about the same relation to the science of sociology that the first ten experiments performed by beginners in the laboratory have to the science of chemistry—they may then begin to ask how men have succeeded in systematizing social facts, *i. e.*, they are now ready for an introduction to sociology. The most available literature for that purpose, to students who have followed our advice thus far, will be :

3. Small and Vincent, *Introduction*. Book I. These five chapters survey the origin and scope of sociology in the most elementary and general way, and suggest some of the important questions which the sociologists have at present under discussion.

4. Professor Franklin H. Giddings, *The Theory of Sociology*. A brief monograph, the promise of a larger work to be issued at once. Many differences of view are apparent between 3 and 4. These simply illustrate our second preliminary remark, which amounted to the caution that sociology is in a very early stage of formative process. Study of facts and criticism of explanations is at present our business.

5. J. S. Mackenzie, *Introduction to Social Philosophy*. 2d ed. This

book surveys the whole field of social philosophy in a masterly manner. No one should attempt to read it who is not practiced in philosophical thinking, and familiar with some of the most influential ancient and modern systems of philosophy. Clergymen will especially appreciate the correlation of sociology with many phases of religious philosophy.

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Titles 3-5 inclusive are virtually in the department of methodology. To these should be added :

6. The series of papers now appearing in this JOURNAL by Professor Lester F. Ward. They will constitute a most valuable introduction to sociology. Professor Ward does not present these papers strictly as fresh contributions to sociology, but he desires to have them regarded as restatements of familiar positions, or as elaborations of views which have been taken for granted. We may be permitted to say that his own estimate of the importance of the series is much below that which other competent critics will reach.

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It would seem that a science about the methodology of which so much has been written must be comparatively advanced. On the contrary there are in English only two published attempts, on a somewhat comprehensive scale, to formulate a sociology. First in order of time was :

7. Herbert Spencer—(a) *First Principles*.
 (b) *Principles of Sociology*, 2 vols.
 (c) *Principles of Ethics*, 2 vols.

Although the second of these titles (2 vols.) are alone designated sociology, Mr. Spencer's system has to be gathered from the five volumes named, not to mention his important essays.

It is not now in place to point out the peculiarities or the limitations of Mr. Spencer's system. We content ourselves with the single remark that even if we find it necessary to revise all his specific conclusions; and even if his anthropological data prove to be entirely insufficient for the sort of induction which he has attempted, he deserves to be studied as an index of the work which must be done by collectors before we shall be in possession of the material of one most essential sort for the construction of sociology. In logical and chronological succession we name :

8. Professor Lester F. Ward—(a) *Dynamic Sociology*.
 (b) *The Psychic Factors of Civilization*.

These two works are practically one, or rather (b) is an extended appendix to (a). The earlier work has been a stumbling-block to many, first, because its science—including psychology—roused opposition; second, because its philosophy was understood to be materialism, and it was needlessly rough in its references to religion. With all allowances, the work must always occupy a distinguished position in the history of American sociology. Nobody can understand contemporary sociological thought unless he has made himself familiar with the main argument of this work.

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We have thus indicated the necessary preliminaries of study in today's social science. This general survey is necessary if one is to know his bearings, and to choose intelligently a particular department of social science or group of social problems for further study. Each of these has its own methodology and its own literature, to which special reference will be made in subsequent numbers.